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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP AND EAP/CM  
NSC FOR DENNIS WILDER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2031  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [HK](#) [CH](#) [UK](#)  
SUBJECT: U.K. TAKES STRONGER LINE ON HONG KONG  
DEMOCRATIZATION

CLASSIFIED BY: ECONOMIC/POLITICAL SECTION ACTING CHIEF JEFF ZAISER; REA  
SONS 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: IN A JULY 25 REPORT, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT STATED THAT HONG KONG SHOULD IMPLEMENT UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE "AS SOON AS POSSIBLE" AND ALSO OBSERVED THAT THERE HAS BEEN "LITTLE OR NO VISIBLE PROGRESS" TOWARD THAT GOAL. THE REPORT RECEIVED BROAD COVERAGE IN THE HONG KONG PRESS, WHICH ALSO PUBLISHED COMMENTS FROM THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT THAT BOTH IT AND BEIJING "WERE FULLY ALIVE TO" THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE HONG KONG PEOPLE FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE. ACCORDING TO THE BRITISH CONSULATE, THE LATEST REPORT DID NOT DEVIATE FROM POLICY IN PLACE SINCE DECEMBER 2005, WHICH IS THAT THE U.K. WANTS TO SEE UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN HONG KONG AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. OUR CONTACT NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD STRENGTHENED ITS "LANGUAGE AROUND THE POLICY" TO REFLECT THEIR FRUSTRATION OVER THE LACK OF PROGRESS ON DEMOCRATIZATION. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE REPORT'S RELEASE, THE PRC MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER IN HONG KONG, LU XINHUA, PULLED BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL BRADLEY ASIDE AT A DINNER TO INFORM HIM THAT BEIJING "DID NOT APPRECIATE FOREIGN GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE" IN THE AFFAIRS OF HONG KONG. LU'S SENSITIVITY TO THE BRITISH REPORT MAY HAVE BEEN HEIGHTENED BY THE RECENT CRITICAL PUBLIC COMMENTS BY TWO PROMINENT BRITISH VISITORS, FORMER GOVERNOR CHRIS PATTEN AND MINISTER OF STATE IAN MCCARTNEY, ON THE SLOW PACE OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN HONG KONG.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: WHILE THE BRITISH CONSULATE CLAIMS THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN THEIR LONG-STANDING HONG KONG POLICY, THE STRONGER LANGUAGE USED IN THE REPORT TO DESCRIBE AND AMPLIFY THAT POLICY IS NOTEWORTHY. IT ALSO APPEARS TO CONSTITUTE AN ADJUSTMENT COMPARED TO OCTOBER 2005 WHEN, FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE DONALD TSANG'S PROPOSALS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL BRADLEY REMARKED PUBLICLY THAT THOSE PROPOSALS WERE "A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION." BRADLEY AND TSANG HAVE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE THEY SERVED TOGETHER IN THE BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION BEFORE HONG KONG'S REVERSION TO THE PRC. SUBSEQUENTLY, TSANG'S REFORM PACKAGE WAS BLOCKED BY THE LEGCO DEMOCRATS IN

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DECEMBER. IN A JUNE 2006 DINNER WITH VISITING MEMBERS OF THE U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION, DEMOCRATIC PARTY FOUNDER MARTIN LEE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE LACK OF SUPPORT FROM THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, TELLING US THAT "ONLY THE U.S. IS TRYING TO HELP HONG KONG." END  
SUMMARY AND COMMENT

BRITAIN RELEASES SIX-MONTH REPORT ON HONG KONG

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13. (SBU) ON JULY 25, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED ITS LATEST "SIX-MONTHLY REPORT ON HONG KONG," COVERING DEVELOPMENTS FROM JANUARY TO JUNE 2006. THIS WAS THE NINETEENTH SUCH REPORT PREPARED BY THE U.K FOREIGN MINISTRY TO MONITOR AND ASSESS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE "SINO-BRITISH JOINT DECLARATION ON THE QUESTION OF HONG KONG." AMONG OTHER ISSUES, THE DOCUMENT DISCUSSED IN DETAIL THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM DEBATE IN HONG KONG. IN THAT REGARD, FOREIGN SECRETARY MARGARET BECKETT, IN THE REPORT'S FOREWORD,

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REAFFIRMED THE U.K. GOVERNMENT'S LONG-STANDING POLICY: "WE BELIEVE THAT HONG KONG SHOULD ADVANCE TO A SYSTEM OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, AS ENVISAGED IN THE BASIC LAW, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE." FURTHERMORE, THE REPORT STATED THAT THERE HAS BEEN "LITTLE OR NO VISIBLE PROGRESS" ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, AND IT CALLED ON THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION GOVERNMENT (HKSARG) AND THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO "ESTABLISH A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE TO REALIZE THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE." MANY OF HONG KONG'S NEWSPAPERS COVERED THE RELEASE OF THE REPORT, IN VARYING DEGREES OF DETAIL.

14. (SBU) THE LOCAL PRESS ALSO REPORTED THE RESPONSE BY THE HKSARG TO THE BRITISH DOCUMENT, QUOTING A SPOKESMAN FROM THE CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS BUREAU (CAB) WHO REMARKED THAT BOTH THE PRC CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE HKSARG "WERE FULLY ALIVE TO" THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE HONG KONG PEOPLE FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE. NOTING THAT THE HKSARG WOULD PREPARE A REPORT ON UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE BY EARLY 2007, BASED ON ONGOING DISCUSSIONS BY THE COMMISSION ON STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT, AND WOULD THEN "REFLECT" THOSE VIEWS TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE HKSARG HOPED THAT THIS WOULD PROVIDE A BASIS FOR FURTHER PROMOTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM 2007 TO 2012.

15. (C) ON JULY 27, BRITISH CONSULATE POLITICAL OFFICER SARAH ROBINSON TOLD US THAT, DESPITE THE EXTENSIVE PRESS ATTENTION

AND HKSARG RESPONSE TO THE REPORT, IN FACT HER GOVERNMENT HAD "GONE NO FURTHER THAN OUR STANDARD LINE SINCE DECEMBER 2005" ON HONG KONG: "WE WANT TO SEE UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE." WHAT HAD CHANGED, SAID ROBINSON, WAS THE "LANGUAGE AROUND THE POLICY," WHICH HAD BEEN TOUGHENED TO REFLECT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S FRUSTRATION OVER THE DELAYS AND OVERALL LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION. SHE SAID THE U.K. WAS "TRYING TO GIVE THEM A NUDGE." ROBINSON ALSO TOLD US THAT DURING A JULY 25 DINNER, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE RELEASE OF THE REPORT, LU XINHUA, COMMISSIONER OF THE PRC MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN HONG KONG, PULLED BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL STEPHEN BRADLEY ASIDE FOR A "PRIVATE CHAT." LU TOLD BRADLEY THAT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT "DID NOT APPRECIATE FOREIGN GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE" IN THE AFFAIRS OF HONG KONG, WHICH WAS A PART OF THE PRC. ROBINSON ALSO NOTED THE PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM THE HKSARG, WHICH SHE DESCRIBED AS RELATIVELY MILD; IN THE PAST, THE CAB REGULARLY COMPLAINED TO THE CONSULATE THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT EVEN ISSUE THE SIX-MONTH REPORTS.

OUTSPOKEN VISITORS FROM LONDON

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16. (C) PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT FOLLOWED CLOSELY ON THE HEELS OF VISITS BY TWO PROMINENT FIGURES FROM THE U.K. DURING A JULY 10-11 VISIT MOSTLY DEVOTED TO COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRADE, INVESTMENT AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS IAN MCCARTNEY DELIVERED A SPEECH AT THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB ENTITLED "ECONOMIC SUCCESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STABILITY." IN THOSE REMARKS, MCCARTNEY DIVERGED FROM HIS TOPIC TO STATE THAT UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE SHOULD BE INTRODUCED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO HONG KONG COULD CONTINUE TO PROSPER. HE SAID UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE WAS SOMETHING THE MAJORITY OF HONG KONG CITIZENS

WANTED, AS EVIDENCED BY THE LARGE PRO-DEMOCRACY DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE PAST THREE YEARS. ACCORDING TO ROBINSON, MCCARTNEY'S REMARKS HAD BEEN PREPARED IN PARALLEL WITH THE SIX-MONTH REPORT; HER GOVERNMENT HAD WANTED "TO USE HIM TO RESTATE OUR HONG KONG POLICY IN STRONGER TERMS."

17. (C) MORE RECENTLY, LORD CHRIS PATTEN, THE LAST BRITISH GOVERNOR OF HONG KONG, PAID A SIX-DAY VISIT TO HONG KONG JULY 20-25, DURING WHICH HE MADE NUMEROUS PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND COMMENTS. IN ADDITION TO PRAISING HIS FORMER DEPUTY, ANSON CHAN, AS A "GREAT CHINESE PATRIOT" AND OUTSTANDING LEADER, PATTEN ALSO SAID THE HONG KONG PEOPLE SHOULD CONSIDER THE PROPOSALS FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE THAT CHAN REPORTEDLY IS PREPARING. PATTEN ALSO OPINED THAT DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG WAS TOO SLOW AND THAT SOCIAL HARMONY COULD ONLY BE REALIZED BY GIVING THE PEOPLE MORE RESPONSIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, HOWEVER, PATTEN DECLINED TO "BE DRAWN INTO EVERY TWIST AND TURN OF THE DEBATE" ON UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, ONLY REMARKING THAT "THERE WERE NEVER 700,000 PEOPLE (DEMONSTRATING) IN THE STREETS WHEN I WAS GOVERNOR." HE ALSO DECLINED TO COMMENT ON WHICH OF HIS FORMER SUBORDINATES, DONALD TSANG OR ANSON CHAN, WOULD MAKE A BETTER CHIEF EXECUTIVE. ASKED ABOUT PATTEN'S COMMENTS, ROBINSON SIMPLY NOTED THAT THEY REFLECTED HIS PERSONAL VIEWS RATHER THAN U.K. GOVERNMENT POLICY.

MULLINS